

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 002419

SIPDIS

FOR STATE WHA/BSC, WHA/EPSC
PASS NSC FOR TOM SHANNON, MIKE DEMPSEY
PASS USTR FOR SUE CRONIN
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/25/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AR](#) [PROTESTS](#)

SUBJECT: KIRCHNER MOVES SECURITY SECRETARIAT INTO CASA
ROSADA

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 02320

[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 01023

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez for reason 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On August 20 President Nestor Kirchner announced the transfer of the Security Secretariat from the Justice Ministry to the Interior Ministry. This is widely viewed as a positive step that will increase the profile of security issues, by both placing one of the most influential Ministers in charge of the portfolio and locating the Secretariat's offices in the same building as the President.

SIPDIS

It is also an indication that the President is anxious to halt his falling poll numbers by taking a more active role in the management of security issues. The move comes days in front of what promises to be the biggest anti-crime protest to date by anti-crime crusader Juan Carlos Blumberg, and is just one of several recent GOA initiatives designed to demonstrate the Government's work to improve the security situation. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On August 20 President Nestor Kirchner announced the transfer of the Security Secretariat from the Justice Ministry to the Interior Ministry. Newly-appointed Security Secretary Alberto Iribarne (reftel A) and his entire staff

SIPDIS

have been bureaucratically moved from the Justice Ministry to the Interior Ministry, and will be physically relocated to the Casa Rosada. The move illustrates the increasing importance of security concerns in Argentina, and Kirchner's attempts to indicate he is proactively addressing the problem. As a result of the move Iribarne will report to Interior Minister Anibal Fernandez, one the most outspoken and influential members of the Kirchner Cabinet. The move also locates Iribarne in the same building as the President, which is locally being seen as a sign that the President will now play a personal role in GOA security policies. Buenos Aires Province Governor Felipe Sola reflected the view that the change would increase Presidential involvement in this contentious issue when he said: "the security issue will be physically closer to the President." (COMMENT: Not everyone agrees-- one local observer told Ambassador that moving the Security Secretariat to the Presidency increased the risk of further politicization of the Security Forces. END COMMENT.)

[1](#)3. (C) In the days leading up to the transfer Fernandez seemed to go out of his way to pick a fight with both the moderate and the radical piquetero elements. Other members of the Cabinet did not support his statements, but were also restrained in their criticism. Since adding the security issue to his portfolio, Fernandez has remained quiet on the piquetero issue, but did spend his first weekend in charge of the nation's security "personally supervising" the work of the Gendarmeria (border guard) and the Prefectura (coast guard) working in the Buenos Aires area. The Government announced the change while Justice and Security Minister Horacio Rosatti was out of town, and reports indicate he was not consulted prior to the announcement. Rosatti has yet to comment publicly on the move.

[1](#)4. (C) On August 24 the Commander of Operations for the Gendarmeria, General Roberto Nieva Malaver, met with the DCM. He expressed concern for the President's current security strategy but support for placing the Security Portfolio under Fernandez. He informed the DCM that more than 1,000 of the total 17,000 strong Gendarmeria were currently serving in and around the Capital. He stressed that they were filling an internal security role that his troops were neither trained nor equipped to accomplish, and expressed great concern that the diversion of his agency from its traditional border security function would lead to a general worsening of the border security and drug trafficking situation. He lamented that the current administration is focused totally on security in the Buenos Aires area and stated that "for Kirchner the national border is General Paz" (a street that marks the end of the Buenos Aires suburbs.) He reflected the

commonly held view that the security problem has recently gotten much worse. He intimated that the Administration's policy of purging the police and involving the Gendarmeria, instead of providing sufficient resources to establish a credible and clean police force, was a mistake. He stressed that "I do not argue for my force (Gendarmeria) but for my country, the problem of security is very serious, I have children and when they go out dancing I can't sleep." However, he also commented that he felt that transferring responsibility for security to the Interior Ministry was a positive move. He stated that Fernandez "is a fighter, and a very important person in the Government."

15. (C) The Security Secretariat's move comes days before the third protest organized by anti-crime crusader Juan Carlos Blumberg (Reftel B). Blumberg has focused most of his attention on the Buenos Aires provincial leadership, but he has also made petitions to the National Congress and demanded swifter action from the Federal Government. The move also comes during a flurry of security-related activity by various government agencies attempting to demonstrate their pro-security efforts in advance of the August 26 Blumberg march. Recent changes include: passing of a crime bill enabling Judges to order convicts to serve separate sentences non-consecutively up to a 50-year maximum jail term; the deployment of an 80-man elite provincial police unit that will act independently of existing provincial police forces in San Isidro, a provincial area known as the kidnapping capital of Argentina, to both combat crime and investigate police corruption; the start of a cooperative anti-crime push between federal and provincial agencies including the Gendarmeria, Prefectura, and provincial police in five provincial neighborhoods surrounding the Capital; the announcement of plans to summon the Federal Security Council to increase coordination; and, the appointment of Maria del Carmen Falbo as the new prosecutor-general for the Province of Buenos Aires.

16. (C) Federal and Provincial leaders have all roundly downplayed the importance of Blumberg as a national figure as well as the importance of his grassroots social protest movement. Buenos Aires Governor Sola recently attempted to minimize Blumberg's importance by stating that "Kidnappers are not bothered by marches." (COMMENT: While it is probably true that marches have little impact on kidnappers, it is obvious that politicians including the President, the Buenos Aires Mayor and many members of congress do read the papers and are clearly bothered by marches and falling poll numbers. Blumberg his anti-crime campaign, and the growing public discontent are fueling a slide in the Kirchner Administration's approval ratings. Both the Federal and Provincial leaderships are keenly aware that the Greater Buenos Aires populace has become increasingly fixated by security issues, and are attempting to take concrete -- and publicized -- steps to improve the situation. END COMMENT.)

GUTIERREZ